

The season is not over until . . .

During the spring of 2003 I was struck by the incredible amount of damage caused, apparently, by the larvae of Winter Moth *Operophtera brunnata* (L.) in Balls Wood and elsewhere in east Hertfordshire. The leaves of several trees, but of hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* in particular, were riddled with holes and larvae were easily beaten. Of course, this is not unusual, but the degree of defoliation seemed excessive. At the end of the year, on the extremely mild night on 12 December 2003, I was proven correct. I took two mv traps to Thunderfield Grove, another woodland not far from Balls Wood and within five hours I had caught 524 winter moths (my use of lower case is intentional – some were certainly Winter Moth *O. brunnata*, but several were Northern Winter *O. fagata* (Scharf.)). This was a very small proportion of what was around; there were thousands and thousands of them. At rest on the trunk of every hornbeam and every oak *Quercus* in the wood were from 10 to 50 males as well as several females. Interestingly, there were none on the birch *Betula* trunks. Being slightly mad we tried to count how many winter moths there were on the trees beside the path between the car and the traps. We were distracted and lost count either at 4232 or 4322! About a quarter to one third appeared to be Northern Winter Moth (*O. fagata*). A few other species managed to fight their way in to the trap including the Mottled umber *Erannis defoliaria* (Cl.) the Chestnut *Conistra vaccinii* (L.) and the oecophorid *Agonopterix arenella* (D.& S.). I would like to thank Neil Chamberlain for arranging access to Thunderfield Grove, a Woodland Trust property.— MARK COOPER, 37 Hobbs Close, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire EN8 0EB (E-mail: badmotsco@ntlworld.com).

Mitochondria miniata Forst. ab. *flava* de Graaf (Lep.: Arctiidae) in north-west Kent

Barrett (1895. *The Lepidoptera of the British Islands*) mentions two specimens of ab. *flava* of *M. miniata*, the Rosy Footman – one from the New Forest in the collection of Mr. Sydney Webb and one other, along with some intermediate forms, in that of Mr. Bond, suggesting that *flava* is a very rare aberration. Chalmers-Hunt (1962. *Butterflies and Moths of Kent. Supl. Ent. Rec.* 74) considered it rare in Kent and that he knew of only two Kent specimens. He does not mention ab. *intermedia* Lempke.

On 7 July 2003 I noted an example of ab. *flava* at my garden m.v. light at Dartford, while earlier, on 23 June, ab. *intermedia* was attracted to it – these in a season total of 46 examples. The appearance of the latter, with only the basal and central areas of the wings yellow, suggest they might be genetically the heterozygote form of ab. *flava* and they are more often encountered.

My previous acquaintance with ab. *flava* has been in Orlestone Forest in East Kent, on 19 July 1968 (2), 23 July 1979 (1), 10 August 1982 (1) and 29 July 1983 (1), all at m.v. light.— B. K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent DA5 2HN.